

CORRESPONDENCE

RESPECTING

ABYSSINIANS AT JERUSALEM.

1850-1867.

*Presented to the House of Commons, in pursuance of their Address dated December 5, 1867,
with further Papers presented by Command of Her Majesty. 1868.*

LONDON:
PRINTED BY HARRISON AND SONS.

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for—

“Copy of all Correspondence between the Jerusalem Consulate and the Foreign Office, and the Jerusalem Consulate and the Constantinople Embassy, from the year 1850 to the year 1863, on the affairs of the Abyssinians at Jerusalem.”

With subsequent Correspondence presented by Her Majesty's Command : 1865—1867.

No. 1.

Consul Finn to Viscount Palmerston.—(Received December 19.)

My Lord,

Jerusalem, November 30, 1850.

I HAVE the honour to relate that, some months ago, a small party of Abyssinian priests brought to me a letter of recommendation for good offices from Mr. Plowden, Her Majesty's Consul in Abyssinia.

Shortly afterwards they appealed to me for protection from the insults of Mahometans, who annoyed them for wearing white turbans; they protested that it is the custom of their country, and that, being foreigners, they are not amenable to customs or rules of Turkish subjects. After some time, however, they adopted the dark-coloured turbans worn generally by Christians here. They were frequently to be seen at the house of his Lordship our Bishop.

On the 10th of last month they came to complain that the Armenian ecclesiastics were endeavouring to take from them their church and convent; that his Lordship had advised them to seize the key by a stratagem from the Armenians, who had previously usurped its possession, and now the latter wished to beat them to get it restored.

I had then a long conversation with his Lordship, who related to me that the Abyssinians had been formerly a flourishing body here, in intercommunion with the Armenians and Copts, having a large library and valuable documents; but that at the time of the last plague, about twelve years ago, they had all died away. The Turkish authorities, at the instigation of the Armenians, then burnt all their books and papers under the pretext of danger of infection; and that ever since then the Abyssinians resorting hither reside in the last relic of their former possessions, and subsist for the most part as paupers upon miserable food given them by the wealthy Armenian convent. That the latter had for some years kept possession of the key of the little church attached to the Abyssinian convent, only occasionally admitting the Abyssinians to divine service, but had lately kept it altogether. That his Lordship had advised the latter to regain it by a stratagem, and to keep it.

The next day the poor people came to me again, and in the afternoon a deputation of the Bishops and other Elders of the Armenians came to me on the same subject, declaring that the church had been well known as their property for 400 years past; that the Abyssinians are like wild beasts, going hither and thither, not fit to be trusted with property, but yet had stolen the key, and were encouraged in it by the English Bishop, &c.

At length I proposed, and the Armenians consented to it, that the church should be kept open to both parties till the new Patriarch should arrive (and he was expected shortly), when the case might be impartially examined from documents, in presence of the Bishop and myself.

In a conference with his Lordship, which I had after they had left me, he accused the Armenians of being cunning liars; for he knew the church and convent to have been the Abyssinian property about twenty years ago, and that an inscribed tablet exists in the wall of the church of the Holy Sepulchre, from ancient time, declaring to the same effect. That the Armenians had had a long interview with him before going over to me, and advised that in case of an arrangement being made, such as I had above suggested, the key should be deposited every night with some party not concerned in the matter, as, for instance, the Pasha or the Prussian Consul.

Accordingly I drew out a paper to that effect, but the Armenians would not consent to the last clause. They would keep the key themselves, “for the sake of honour.”

A few days afterwards the matter came before the Pasha, and his Lordship proposed

(he has since told me) that the Abyssinians should keep the key of the church door, entering from their convent: and the Armenians keep the key of the other door, entering the church from the Great Church of the Holy Sepulchre, until the arrival of the new Patriarch.

On the 17th I went to inspect the Abyssinian convent and its little church.

I have heard that his Lordship has had some transactions with the Pasha and his Council since that time, upon the subject; and some correspondence has been kept up.

On the 19th instant the new Patriarch, named John, arrived, and was inaugurated on the 23rd.

I have, &c.
(Signed) J. FINN.

No. 2.

Viscount Palmerston to Consul Finn.

Foreign Office, December 28, 1850.

Sir,

I HAVE received your despatch dated the 30th of November last, on the subject of the differences between the Abyssinians and the Armenians in Jerusalem, respecting the possession of the small church belonging to the former, adjoining the Great Church of the Holy Sepulchre; and I have to state to you my approval of the steps you took and the advice you gave to the parties, as reported in your before-mentioned despatch.

I am, &c.
(Signed) PALMERSTON.

No. 3.

Consul Finn to Viscount Palmerston.—(Received February 3, 1851.)

Jerusalem, December 9, 1850.

(Extract.)

I HAVE the honour to report to your Lordship that, in harmony with the opinion of his Lordship our Bishop, I have been able to effect a reconciliation between the Armenian Convent and the Abyssinians, until some future and complete investigation can be made as to the right of property in dispute.

To understand the case fully, your Lordship will remember that the Copts and the Abyssinians, together with the Syrians and Armenians, subsist in one ecclesiastical inter-communion—the Armenian Convent being the wealthy and powerful patron of the other three.

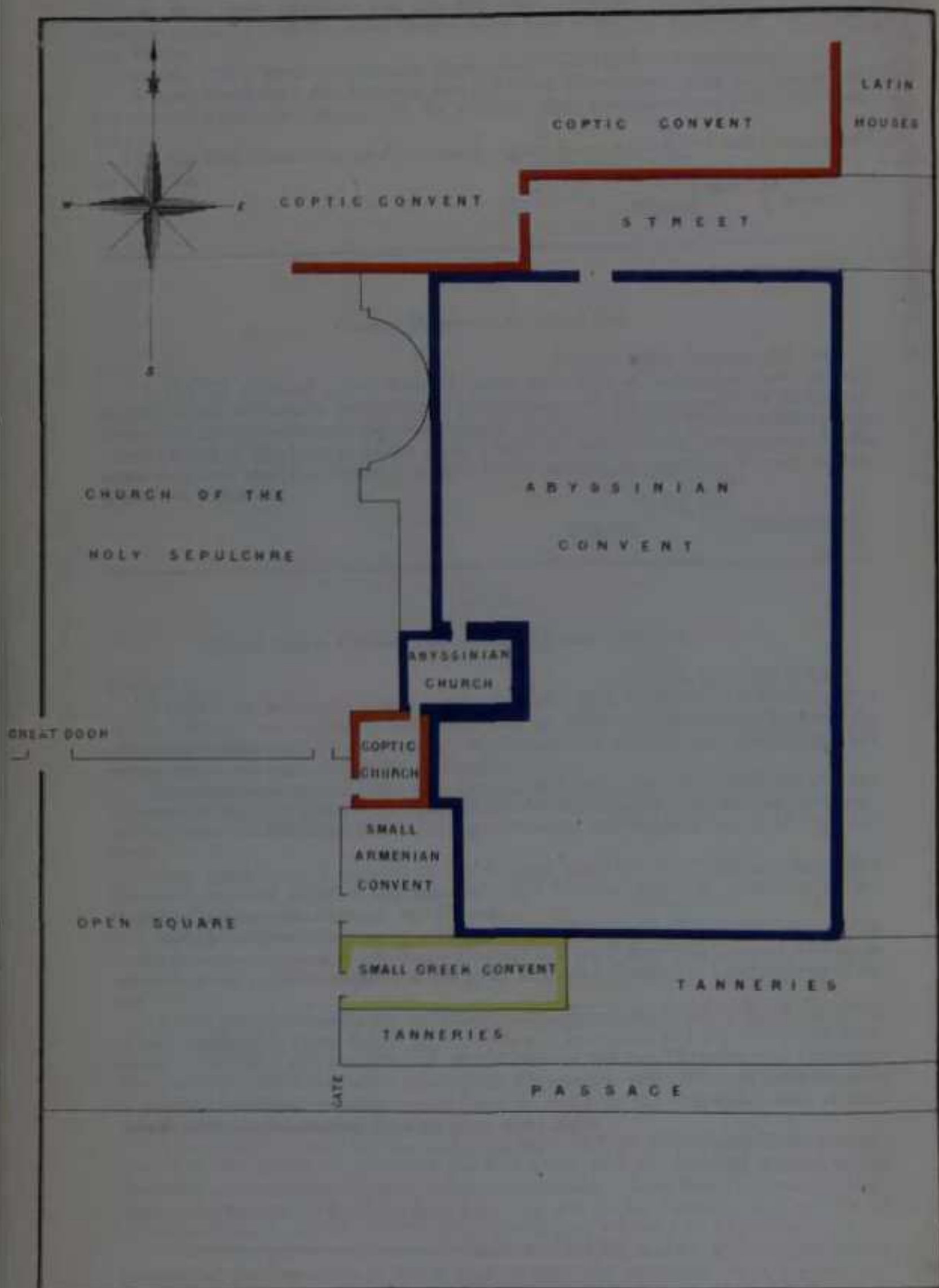
Your Lordship will perceive by the inclosed plan that the Coptic and Abyssinian Convents are near together, and that the Copts have no access to their Church but through the Abyssinian Convent and Church.

Such is the present relation of affairs, though the Abyssinians lay claim not only to both Churches, as well as to the Coptic Convent and small Armenian Convent, with much property around, besides property in the great Armenian Convent in a distant part of the city.

At the time, however, of the last calamitous pestilence, the Copts, under the direction of their patriarch in Cairo, and of the Armenians in Jerusalem, had the Abyssinian documents burned, and got possession of all the keys of the two Churches and Convents. These they have kept ever since, allowing the Abyssinians, who continue to come annually as pilgrims (increasing in number every year), to reside in the dilapidated ruin of their ancient Convent, but locking them up there every night.

The Abyssinians naturally assumed some degree of hope when Bishop Gobat arrived; they met him at the city gate, and the first words that his Lordship uttered within Jerusalem were addressed to them in their own language. Since that time some of their clergy have brought a letter from their King Ras Ali to his Lordship, and a letter of recommendation to me from Mr. Plowden, Her Majesty's Consul for Abyssinia.

Then came the interval between the decease of the late, and the arrival of the present patriarch of the Armenians, in which space of time the patriarchal vicar, a clever and cunning man, acting together with the Coptic Patriarch of Cairo, used the poor Abyssinians with great severity, beat them, chained them, and refused them access to the Church



except at rare intervals; but all this time they were laying their grievances before his Lordship our Bishop, and reminding him of their claims to large property, though unable to produce documents in support of those claims, except a certain stone inscription near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

At length his Lordship advised them to the course which they adopted: that of seizing the key of their church, immediately after Divine service, while the Coptic deacon was looking in another direction. The object aimed at was not only to recover possession of the key, but to throw upon the Copts and Armenians the burden of proving their right to regain it.

Then followed the circumstances in which I had a share, as detailed in my last despatch to your Lordship.

But during my excursion to Safed at the end of October, his Lordship wrote upon the subject to Colonel Rose, and an Order arrived in Jerusalem from his Excellency Wameck Pasha (by whose means obtained I know not), that the key should be restored to the same holders as before the troubles began.

Then arrived his Grace the new Patriarch of the Armenians, and found several abuses to rectify. In this case particularly he has adopted a different policy from that of the vicar and bishops. He has rebuked them in presence of the Abyssinians, then of our bishop's dragoman, and also of myself, professing himself the parent of both Copts and Abyssinians, and asking why should a father take a Church from one of his children to give it to another?

On the 5th instant I had a long conference with his Grace, who used expressions of ardent friendship, thanked me for bringing a green olive-branch, &c. It was at length agreed that the church is to be kept free for both convents, though the Copts are to hold the key. The practice of locking up at night is abolished; and should the Abyssinians have any cause of complaint, their complaint may be made through the British Consulate to the Patriarchate. This arrangement to be in force till both sides are able to enter upon documentary proof of property right.

This is a very important concession; for now the Armenians will no longer be able to beat the Abyssinians, or chain an iron collar round their necks, with a screw to tighten the collar, as they have done less than two years ago.

And again, the Armenian Convent can no more demand the Abyssinian Convent and Church for their own property, overlooking the Copts, as they did lately in a letter to his Lordship our bishop, and verbally to myself.

The present arrangement will not interfere with the daily feeding of a certain number of Abyssinians by the Armenians. Whether this is a distribution of alms, or a commutation for usurped landed property, may be discussed probably hereafter.

I have further to remark that those most conversant with such politics believe that the Patriarch is afraid of driving the Abyssinians to desperation, lest they should throw themselves upon the Anglican Church (especially as they are now constantly reading for themselves the Holy Scriptures, given by our Bishop), which might give them subsistence, and in virtue of its protection rebuild the Abyssinian Convent, which not only adjoins the Holy Sepulchre Church, but covers the subterranean chapel where it is believed Saint Helena found the crosses.

Finally, I should observe that the English influence is acknowledged in these transactions, in consequence of the letter of King Ras Ali to his ancient acquaintance, our bishop, and of the letter from Mr. Plowden to myself; but more especially because his Lordship has repeatedly assured myself and the Armenian authorities that King Ras Ali has petitioned Her Majesty's Government to have the Abyssinians in Jerusalem placed under British political protection; and his Lordship tells me that he is endeavouring to obtain the same by means of his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Inclosure in No. 3.

Plan of relative Position of Armenian, Coptic, and Abyssinian Convents and Churches at Jerusalem.

No. 4.

Viscount Palmerston to Consul Finn.

Sir,

Foreign Office, February 15, 1851.

I HAVE received your despatch of the 9th of December last,* detailing the steps taken by you and the Bishop of Jerusalem to effect a reconciliation between the Armenians, the Copts, and the Abyssinians residing in Jerusalem; and I have to state to you my approval of the steps taken by you, as detailed in your despatch.

I am, &c.

(Signed) PALMERSTON.

No. 5.

Bishop Gobat to the Earl of Malmesbury.—(Received July 6.)

My Lord,

9, Carlton House Terrace, June 29, 1852.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship two letters to Her Majesty, which were inclosed to me for further conveyance by their authors, Ras Ali and Dejazmatch Oobeay, the two independent Chiefs of Abyssinia, with a literal translation, the contents of both being exactly the same, with the exception of one or two words, which do not in the least affect the meaning. The letters have no date, but I have reasons for supposing that they were written about the beginning of the present year, in consequence of a meeting of the two Chiefs at Gondar with the King and some of the most influential ecclesiastics of Abyssinia, in which meeting it was resolved that the two Chiefs should write to Her Majesty the Queen of England, to ask her to authorize me to superintend and protect their countrymen visiting or residing in Jerusalem, and to authorize her representative to lend me his assistance when needed.

The Abyssinians not being in the habit of writing, your Lordship might have some difficulty to find out the precise purport of these two letters, and the practical point in question.

I therefore take the liberty of forwarding to your Lordship the accompanying statement relative to the subject in question.

I have, &c.

(Signed) S. ANGL. HIEROSOL.

Inclosure 1 in No. 5.

Letter from Ras Ali to Her Majesty the Queen.

(Translation.)

FROM the head of the judges, Ali, the Servant of God, the King of Kings, who is one in the Godhead and three in persons.

May this reach the Queen of England? How are you? Are you well, equal to heaven and earth? (That is, my desire for your well-being is infinite.) I desire and expect to be in friendship with you; may you also desire my friendship. What is it that, whilst you exist, my inheritance is taken from me? Whilst every one abides in his inheritance, I am deprived of mine. Now do (what is necessary) that I may not be deprived of my inheritance; (for) I have been deprived of the portion of ground belonging to Abyssinia, (in Jerusalem). To be deprived of one's inheritance is a hard thing; for the inheritance of the earth (of Jerusalem) is the inheritance of heaven. Let not my people (*lit.*, my relatives) be deprived (of their own) during your reign. Let, I pray you, Samuel Gobat be their keeper, that my relatives may not be removed from my inheritance. I pray you (*lit.*, the matter is now in your hand) send me word for whatever you want, and I shall send it.†

* No. 3.

† The above is a literal translation of Ras Ali's letter to Her Majesty. Dejazmatch Oubeay's letter contains exactly the same, with the omission of the last sentence.

Inclosure 2 in No. 5.

A Statement concerning the Present State of Abyssinians at Jerusalem.

THE Abyssinians affirm, and there are hints in ecclesiastical history to the same effect, that in former times they had considerable possessions in Jerusalem, of which they have been deprived, so that now there remains only the convent called Deir Essultan (in which there are at present about sixty pilgrims) in their possession; but that such property, of which they have from time to time been deprived, really belonged to them they cannot prove by any documentary evidence, unless such evidence could be found in the Archives of the local Government, for about twelve or fourteen years ago, when all the Abyssinians residing at Jerusalem had died of plague, their library, containing many valuable manuscript books, was entirely burnt by order of Ibrahim Pasha, with all the documents which might have served them to recover their property in these better times. I have myself seen the library twenty-five years ago, together with such documents; and that all those books and documents were consigned to the flames on the aforesaid occasion is most notorious in Jerusalem. The question, however, is not now about what was, I conceive irretrievably, lost on that occasion, but about the consequences of that conflagration, and of the remedy thereof.

When the last Abyssinian had died of the plague, about the year 1838, the Coptic priest took the keys of the Abyssinian convent and of a chapel belonging to it, at the instigation of the Armenian Patriarch, who has since claimed the right to dispose of both the convent and the chapel.

After these events new Abyssinian pilgrims arrived in such numbers that in the years 1849 and 1850 their average number was never less than one hundred, many of whom were both intelligent and respectable. Yet they were treated like slaves, or rather like beasts, by the Copts and Armenians combined; they could never enter their own chapel but when it pleased the Armenians to open it; and on one occasion, in consequence of which I felt it my duty to interfere, they could not get their chapel opened to perform the funeral service of one of their number. The key of their convent having remained, since the plague aforesaid, in the hands of their oppressors, they were locked up in their convent in the evening until it pleased their Coptic jailor to open it in the morning, so that in case of any severe attacks of illness, which are frequent there, even in small families, they had no means of going out to call for a physician.

Things were in such a state when, about two years ago, I received letters from the King of Abyssinia, from Ras Ali, Dejazmatch Oobeay, and several influential priests, asking me to take their convent and the pilgrims under my jurisdiction and protection, to choose one of the pilgrims, whom I considered most fit for it, and appoint him head of the convent, responsible to me alone, &c. To this I answered that I was most willing to give good advice, and to do for them all that was in my power as a friend to their people and country, where I had formerly been hospitably received, but that I could do nothing for them officially, unless I was authorised to do so by the Queen of England. And now it is in consequence of this hint that Ras Ali and Dejazmatch Oobeay were requested by the King* and a meeting of priests and others, to write to the Queen, as they now have done, to ask her to authorise me and (although the writer has forgotten it) the Consul of Jerusalem to take their countrymen and their convent under our superintendence and protection.

No. 6.

Chevalier Bunson to the Earl of Malmesbury.—(Received July 6.)

Royal Prussian Legation, London,
9, Carlton House Terrace, July 5, 1852.

My Lord,

I HAVE the honour to inclose a letter of the Lord Bishop of Jerusalem,† transmitting to your Lordship petitions directed to Her Majesty by the two independent Chiefs of Abyssinia, Ras Ali and Dejazmatch Oobeay, and accompanied by a statement on the subject of the claims of these Chiefs who ask for the Queen's protection.

As the protection granted by the British Government to these influential men, whose claims seem just, would essentially contribute to promote the authority of the bishopric of

* The King, being of the ancient Royal family, is much respected and believed by the whole people; but he has absolutely no power.

† No. 5.

Jerusalem, in which Prussia and England take an equally great interest, I take the liberty to recommend this question to your Lordship's kind consideration.

I have, &c.
(Signed) BUNSEN.

No. 7.

The Earl of Malmesbury to Bishop Gobat.

My Lord,

Foreign Office, July 10, 1852.

I HAVE had the honour to receive your letter of the 29th of June* inclosing two letters addressed by Ras Ali and Dejazmatch Oobray to the Queen in pursuance of a resolution adopted at a meeting stated to have been held at Gondar between those Chiefs, the King, and some of the most influential ecclesiastics of Abyssinia, to the effect that Her Majesty should be requested to authorize you to protect and superintend their countrymen visiting or residing in Jerusalem, and to authorize the British agent residing at Jerusalem to lend you his assistance for that purpose when required.

I have to state to you in reply that Her Majesty's Government cannot undertake to protect officially the natives of Abyssinia who may chance to be residing in the territory of the Sublime Porte. But Her Majesty's Consul at Jerusalem will be instructed to use his good offices for them in case of need, as members of a Christian church in spiritual communion with the established church in this country.

In regard to yourself, the licence from the Crown under which you were consecrated, enables you to exercise spiritual jurisdiction as well in Abyssinia as in Syria; and I think it on every account desirable that, as a purely spiritual authority, you should confine your interference in behalf of Abyssinians visiting Jerusalem exclusively to spiritual matters.

I am, &c.
(Signed) MALMESBURY.

No. 8.

The Earl of Malmesbury to Chevalier Bunsen.

M. le Chevalier,

Foreign Office, July 10, 1852.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your note of the 5th instant† inclosing a letter from Bishop Gobat, communicating memorials addressed to Her Majesty by two independent Chiefs of Abyssinia, and I have the honour to transmit to you under flying seal the reply which I have returned to Bishop Gobat's communication;‡

I am, &c.
(Signed) MALMESBURY.

No. 9.

The Earl of Malmesbury to Consul Finn.

Sir,

Foreign Office, July 10, 1852.

I TRANSMIT to you herewith copies of a letter, and of its inclosures, which I have received from Bishop Gobat, and of the answer which I have returned to it,§ respecting the wish which seems to have been expressed by the Rulers of Abyssinia, that the natives of that country visiting or residing at Jerusalem may be taken under British protection.

In pursuance of what I have stated in my letter to the Bishop, I have to authorize you, in case of need, to use your good offices for the protection of any Abyssinians who may chance to be in Jerusalem, as being members of a Christian Church in spiritual communion with the Established Church in this country.

I am, &c.
(Signed) MALMESBURY.

* No. 5.

† No. 6.

‡ No. 7.

§ Nos. 5 and 7.

No. 10.

Consul Finn to the Earl of Malmesbury.—(Received September 18.)

My Lord,

Jerusalem, August 17, 1852.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge receipt of your Lordship's despatch dated 10th July,* authorising me, in case of need, to use my good offices in favour of the Abyssinian community in Jerusalem.

I shall very willingly attend to those instructions in favour of the poor and oppressed people, but I fear it will often require delicate management in using those friendly offices, since they have powerful enemies in the rich Armenian community and the vindictive Copts, and are themselves of very hot temperament.

Especial delicacy will be required if they should undertake to rebuild or make repairs in the convent.

Our benevolent aid will be certainly misunderstood, for the Oriental ecclesiastical establishments will not fail to regard this species of protection as an indirect step of the Protestants towards gaining a portion of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which they could not obtain otherwise. The Abyssinian Convent covers part of the sanctuaries, especially the reputed place of finding the crosses.

I have, &c.

(Signed) J. FINN.

No. 11.

The Earl of Malmesbury to Consul Finn.

Sir,

Foreign Office, September 28, 1852.

WITH reference to your despatch of the 17th of August,† I have to instruct you most carefully to avoid taking any step which may seem intended to obtain for the Protestant community at Jerusalem a portion of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

I am, &c.

(Signed) MALMESBURY.

No. 12.

Consul Finn to the Earl of Malmesbury.—(Received July 12.)

(Extract.)

Jerusalem, June 21, 1858.

I HAVE the honour to report the unusual circumstance of a visit to Jerusalem of persons in high rank, natives of Abyssinia.

These were, a Councillor of State (Maccar) named Michail (or Guebra Yassaw), and a military commander of 3,000 Infantry and 7,000 Cavalry, as we were told. They were attended by a military officer on the part of His Highness the Viceroy of Egypt.

Their residence was in the Coptic convent, the adjoining Abyssinian convent being in too ruined a condition for their reception. And they repaired to the sacred localities of the Christian religion in Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

On the 10th instant I visited them, with which they expressed themselves much pleased.

I reminded them of their people, when in this country, being under Her Majesty's gracious protection, by your Lordship's directions in 1852; and that, aware of their depressed state in Jerusalem, I had lately taken advantage of a deputation returning thither to address a letter to the King, informing him of their protection here, and of my desire to carry out Her Majesty's benevolent intentions.‡ That I had lately established one of themselves as President over the rest, and should be glad if some effectual measures could be taken for confirming them in their right to their own convent here, which, although known by all parties to be theirs, as long as it is kept out of a legal Court, might be lost to them if contested, since all their documents were destroyed some years ago, probably at the instigation of the Copts and Armenians, under pretext of danger of plague.

The Maccar promised to recommend to his King the sending of a properly appointed officer to superintend the Abyssinian affairs in Jerusalem.

* No. 9.

† No. 10.

‡ No copy of this letter was sent home by Consul Finn.

Of late years I have had Abyssinian servants always in my household, and one of these has left this country in the train of the Maccar, in order to return with him to his home.

I find them an undisciplined but high-spirited people; proud of being independent of Mahometans, and, in their own country, able to cope with and resist the latter, on more than equal terms, in the name of Christianity.

They seem to me far more susceptible of improvement than Arab peasantry.

It is a remarkable fact that the Mahometans are in the habit of citing ancient traditions to the effect that the Abyssinians are destined to destroy Mecca and Medina.

And not less remarkable is the extraordinary reverence which in Abyssinia is paid to persons or objects reaching them from Jerusalem.

No. 13.

Consul Finn to the Earl of Malmesbury. — (Received July 5.)

My Lord,

Jerusalem, May 27, 1859.

I HAVE the honour to represent to your Lordship that the Abyssinian Colony in Jerusalem have lately been thrown into extreme terror by a report that the Grand Duke Constantine of Russia was about to purchase their convent from the Copts, who have no right whatever to that property, and to eject them from it.

This seems to have arisen from the circumstance of the Copts having sold to the Russians a small piece of land, undoubtedly their own, adjoining the convent of the Abyssinians, and from some Russian officer having been lately seen to inspect the latter with a paper in his hand.

It is the intention of the Russians to build their Consulate on the piece purchased as above mentioned, and there can be no doubt that the Abyssinian convent would be very advantageous for Russian objects, seeing that it lies between the intended Consulate and the Greek Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

But I have not been able to learn that any steps have been really taken for procuring that property.

This alarm, however, has awakened my attention afresh to the tenure of the convent by the Abyssinians which, as I have had the honour to report on several occasions, is unsupported by any remaining documents, for all documents of that nature were burned at the instigation of the Armenians many years ago, on pretence of their harbouring the plague.

I have formerly mentioned a stone tablet built into the wall of the Holy Sepulchre Church* as being said to substantiate their claim to the property; but on proceeding to take a copy of it by photography some years ago, it was found to be in the Georgian language, and probably referring to a Georgian convent which was formerly in that neighbourhood.

The truest demonstration of the Abyssinian claim lies in the fact of its recognition by universal oral testimony, and of its being undisputed by any existing party in Jerusalem.

Still, to obviate possible danger in future, it may be expedient to obtain some document from the Porte in which their right should be acknowledged; and perhaps this might be had by means of some petition of the Rulers of Abyssinia requesting Her Majesty's good offices with the Sublime Porte for that object, such, for instance, as a renewal of that presented in June 1852.†

For myself I should be rather inclined to leave the question at rest, and to watch carefully what takes place, in fact; inasmuch as every year adds to the value of oral testimony and actual possession. There might be a danger also of the Porte, when asked for a document, attempting to fetter the Abyssinians by an assertion of the Sultan's supremacy over their country.

But I believe it useful to enter the matter on record, at this period, by writing the present despatch.

My former despatches regarding the Abyssinians are dated November 30 and December 9, 1850; and June 21, 1853.‡

The documents which I have received from Her Majesty's Government on the subject are contained as inclosures in your Lordship's despatch of July 10, 1852.§

I have, &c.

(Signed) JAMES FINN.

* See No. 3.

† See Inclosure 1 in No. 5.

‡ Nos. 1, 3, and 12.

§ No. 2.

No. 14.

Consul Finn to Earl Russell.—(Received March 31.)

My Lord,

Jerusalem, March 13, 1862.

I HAVE the honour to inclose copy of my despatch of the 11th instant to Her Majesty's Embassy, respecting the Abyssinians in Jerusalem, and to request from your Lordship whatever relief may be possible on their behalf, by means of a recognition of that people as independent of Turkey, and, in this country, under English protection.

I have, &c.

(Signed) JAMES FINN.

Inclosure in No. 14.

Consul Finn to Sir H. Bulwer.

Sir,

Jerusalem, March 11, 1862.

I HAVE the honour to report to your Excellency that recently a quarrel took place on a Sunday during Divine Service in the church which is common to both Copts and Abyssinians, within the convent of the latter. From this circumstance, namely, that of position, such disputes do sometimes occur, especially respecting the keys, which are kept in duplicate. The Copts lately proceeded even to take off the old locks and replace them by new ones.

The Pasha immediately on hearing of the disturbance, repaired to the place with a whole battalion of Infantry, whom he stationed at their principal gate, namely in the open square before the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, into which Church he summoned the Abyssinian President, and then placed a guard at the small upper gate of the convent.

The larger force had orders to prevent the exit of the Abyssinians.

On this the poor timid people thought it time to call for my aid, and contrived to send me a messenger. I went thither to inquire into the proceedings.

As soon as I arrived the Abyssinian President found himself released; and he came to tell me that the Pasha had threatened to make him, by force, surrender the church and the way to it entirely to the Copts, which order, however, he steadily refused to obey, on the ground that he and his people are not Turkish subjects, but have an independent nationality, under English protection in this country.

And here we come to the real point at issue.

The Abyssinians in religion are under the same Patriarch as the Copts, and both are in perfect intercommunion of doctrine. The Turkish Government therefore regards them practically as one nation, and it is very much to be feared that some day the helpless Abyssinians will have to succumb to the Copts, under the powerful dictation of the Armenians, unless they be fully recognised by a formal document, to be foreigners to Turkish rule.

And I think the time is now come to ask for such a document.

I have the honour to refer your Excellency to my despatch of the 27th May, 1860,* to London, copy of which I inclosed to Her Majesty's Embassy on the 7th of June of that year, which gives full information on the subject of the Abyssinians.

His Excellency Suraya Pasha employs his utmost efforts to avoid recognizing them as non-rayahs.

I have, &c.

(Signed) JAMES FINN.

No. 15.

*Consul Finn to Earl Russell.—(Received May 19.)**Jerusalem, May 7, 1862.*

My Lord

I HAVE the honour to state to your Lordship that his Excellency Suraya Pasha came to me lately to impress upon my attention the political principle that the Sublime Porte will never recognize the Abyssinians as a people independent of their dominion, and

to assure me that all ancient Firmans or other documents issued on their behalf used to pass through the hands of the Civil Governor of Jeddah.

His Excellency informed me that he had been directed by his superiors to represent this to me in a friendly conversation.

I observed that Jeddah may have no more to do with Abyssinia than Calais has to do with England: and that as far as regards religious matters, in which the Abyssinian Church is subordinate to the Armenians in this country, this proves no more than the same relation of the Pope of Rome does to the Austrian, French, and Spanish Consuls here, who are yet independent of each other nationally.

I then reminded his Excellency that three or four years ago the Abyssinians were actually at war with the Pasha of Egypt, and gained some considerable advantages over him.

The Pasha contended that this proves no more than does the rebellious state of certain outlying towns in the Desert, which are yet counted in the Pashalic of Jerusalem.

As the conversation proceeded, I mentioned the political disruption of Algiers and of Greece from Turkey, and asked why the Porte did not claim those countries also.

His Excellency replied by asking sharply, "Has the Porte ever recognized her loss of Algiers?" and said that, on the contrary, "all Algerines coming to this country acknowledge themselves to be Turkish subjects. As to Greece, that its independence had been acknowledged because England had joined with the other Powers to compel the recognition."

I made no reference to the common idea that the Sultan claims to be King of India also, because I wished to exclude all controversy between ourselves that did not directly bear upon the question before us, namely the nationality of the Abyssinians.

The conversation concluded by my stating that I am awaiting directions from your Lordship and from Constantinople, and my promising to give him a letter on the subject of my protection of Abyssinians.

I here inclose copy of what I sent.

I also promised to use my friendly efforts to accommodate matters now in dispute between the Copts and Abyssinians.

For this he thanked me, but refused to join me in the task, as he could not recognize my right to exercise any jurisdiction in Abyssinian matters.

I have the honour to represent to your Lordship that this is not a mere matter of theory, such as the recognition of Algiers or of India to be free from Turkey, but that the Abyssinians are in danger of losing the last poor remains of their large ancient possessions in Jerusalem, if placed under a Turkish Pasha and so under the convents of their oppressors the Armenians and Copts, who are Turkish subjects.

For myself, I can have no interest, nor can Her Majesty's Government have any interest, in the question, except that of advocating the cause of a persecuted people.

I should explain to your Lordship, in conclusion, that I have been in the habit of giving passes to Abyssinians on their returning hence to their own country, but no other documents whatever on any occasion.

I have, &c.
(Signed) JAMES FINN.

Inclosure in No. 15.

Consul Finn to Sureya Pasha.

Excellency,

Jerusalem, May 2, 1862.

IN reply to your question of yesterday, I have the honour to state that whatever I have hitherto done on behalf of the Abyssinians here has been done by virtue of directions received from my Government in London ten years ago,* after the King of Abyssinia had written a letter to Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain, asking to have his people placed under British protection while in Jerusalem.†

Yours, &c.
(Signed) JAMES FINN.

* No. 2.

† Inclosure I in No. 5.

No. 16.

Earl Russell to Consul Finn.

Sir, *Foreign Office, May 29, 1862.*
 I HAVE received your despatch of the 7th instant,* reporting what has passed between you and Sureya Pasha relative to your protection of Abyssinians at Jerusalem, and I have to refer you, for the guidance of your conduct in this matter, to the instructions given to you by Lord Malmesbury in his despatch of the 10th of July, 1852.†

I have nothing to add to those instructions except to enjoin you to act upon them with caution and prudence.

I am, &c.
 (Signed) RUSSELL.

No. 17.

Earl Russell to Sir H. Bulwer.

Sir, *Foreign Office, June 5, 1862.*
 HER Majesty's Consul at Jerusalem has communicated to your Excellency a copy of his despatch of the 7th ultimo,* relative to his protection of Abyssinians at Jerusalem; and I now transmit for your information copies of the answer which I have returned to Mr. Finn, and of the former instruction which was addressed to him on this subject by the Earl of Malmesbury.‡

I am, &c.
 (Signed) RUSSELL.

No. 18.

Sir H. Bulwer to Earl Russell.—(Received June 13.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, June 1, 1862.*
 I HAVE the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith, a copy of a despatch which has been addressed to me by Mr. Consul Finn respecting the protection which, as it would appear, he has been in the habit of according to the Abyssinians established at or visiting Jerusalem.

On referring back to previous correspondence on this subject, I find that Mr. Finn alludes to an instruction from the Earl of Malmesbury, dated July 10, 1852,† but I am not aware that a copy of that despatch was ever communicated to the Embassy.‡ I am consequently somewhat at a loss to perceive under what authority Mr. Finn has assumed the protection of these people, and should feel obliged by your Lordship's instructions on the subject.

I have, &c.
 (Signed) HENRY L. BULWER.

Inclosure 1 in No. 18.

Consul Finn to Sir H. Bulwer.

Sir, *Jerusalem, May 5, 1862.*
 I HAVE the honour to state to your Excellency that Sureya Pasha came to me lately to impress upon my attention the political principle that the Sublime Porte will never recognize the Abyssinians as a people independent of their dominion, and to assure me that all ancient Firmans or other documents issued on their behalf used to pass through the hands of the Civil Governor at Djeddah, also that in Jerusalem, matters there were placed under the Armenian Patriarch.

His Excellency informed me that that he had been directed by his superiors to represent this to me in a friendly conversation.

I observed that Djeddah may have no more to do with Abyssinia than Calais has to do with England, and that as for religious matters, in which the Abyssinian Church is subject

* No. 15.

† No. 9.

‡ Nos. 16 and 2.

§ See No. 17.

to the Armenians, this proves no more than the same relation of the people of Rome does to the Austrian, French and Spanish Consuls here, who are yet independent of each other politically.

I then reminded his Excellency that three or four years ago the Abyssinians were actually at war with the Pasha of Egypt, and gained considerable advantages over him. The Pasha contended that this proves no more than does the rebellious state of certain outlying towns in the desert, which are yet counted in the Pashalic of Jerusalem.

As the conversation proceeded, I mentioned the political disruption of Algiers and Greece from Turkey, and asked why the Pasha did not claim those countries also?

His Excellency replied by asking sharply, "Has the Porte ever recognised her loss of Algiers?" and said that on the contrary "all Algerines coming to this country acknowledge themselves to be Turkish subjects. As for Greece, its independence has been acknowledged because England joined with the other Powers to compel the recognition."

I made no reference to the common idea that the Sultan claims to be King of India also, because I wished to exclude all controversy between ourselves that did not directly bear upon the question before us, namely, the nationality of the Abyssinians.

The conversation concluded by my stating that I am awaiting directions from your Excellency and from London, and my promising to give him a letter on the subject of my protection of Abyssinians here. I here inclose copy of the letter which I sent him.

I also promised to use my friendly efforts to accommodate matters now in dispute between the Copts and Abyssinians.

For this he thanked me, but refused to join me in it, as he could not recognize my right to exercise any jurisdiction in Abyssinian matters.

I have the honour to represent to your Excellency, that this is not a mere matter of theory, such as the recognition of Algiers or of India to be free from Turkey, but that the Abyssinians are in danger of losing the last poor remains of their large ancient possessions in Jerusalem, if placed under a Turkish Pasha, and so under the convents of their oppressors, the Armenians and Copts, who are Turkish subjects.

For myself I can have no interest, nor can the British Government have any interest in the question, except that of advocating the cause of a persecuted people.

I should explain to your Excellency in conclusion, that I have been in the habit of giving passes to Abyssinians on their returning hence to their own country, but no other documents whatever on any occasion.

I have, &c.
(Signed) JAMES FINN.

Inclosure 2 in No. 18.

Consul Finn to Sureyn Pasha, May 2, 1862.

[See Inclosure in No. 15.]

No. 19.

Consul Finn to Earl Russell.—(Received June 23.)

My Lord,

Jerusalem, June 3, 1862.

I HAVE the honour to inclose for your Lordship's inspection, a copy of my despatch of this day's date, addressed to Her Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople, respecting the ill-treatment of the Abyssinians here.

The two despatches from me to his Excellency, referred to in the commencement of the inclosed, I have already sent in copy to your Lordship, on the 13th of March and 7th of May respectively.*

I have, &c.
(Signed) JAMES FINN.

Inclosure in No. 19.

Consul Finn to Sir H. Bulwer.

Sir,

Jerusalem, June 3, 1862.

I HAVE the honour to state to your Excellency, in continuation of my despatches of the 11th March and of the 5th May† respecting the Abyssinians in Jerusalem, that their

* See Nos. 14 and 15.

† See Inclosures in Nos. 14 and 16.

neighbours the Copts have lately taken to beating them more than formerly, both men and women, and otherwise in several petty ways illusing them, besides breaking open the locks of the church. And I am unable to obtain any redress on their behalf, as the Pasha is absent on a journey, and the Local Council acting for him in the city refuse (as they say by his direction) to hear any Abyssinian complaint in which the English Consul interferes, and in which these people do not come into Court as *bona fide* Turkish subjects.

I beg to add that this is a case of real hardship, and likely to lead to further evils, the Turkish authorities maintaining obstinately that the Abyssinians are their subjects, and the Copts and Armenians taking advantage of this principle being asserted to tyrannise over them.

As long as this question remains unsettled, we are unable to enter into the details of dispute in order to promote a final arrangement of them. I therefore beg of your Excellency to furnish me with instructions on the subject as early as possible.

I have, &c.

(Signed) JAMES FINN.

No. 20.

Consul Moore to Earl Russell.—(Received October 15.)

(Extract.)

Jerusalem, October 3, 1863.

I HAVE the honour to transmit herewith, for your Lordship's information, copy of a despatch which I addressed to Her Majesty's Ambassador at the Porte on the 28th ultimo.

I have, &c.

(Signed) NOEL TEMPLE MOORE.

Inclosure in No. 20.

Consul Moore to Sir H. Bulwer.

Sir,

Jerusalem, September 28, 1863.

I HAVE the honour to state to your Excellency that the long standing dispute between the Coptic and Abyssinian Communities established at Jerusalem respecting the proprietorship of the convent and chapel adjoining the church of the Holy Sepulchre, lately broke out afresh. The Convent has hitherto been in the possession of the Abyssinians, whilst the chapel was common to both parties. The ownership of the buildings was claimed by either sect.

The Copts having laid their case before the Turkish authorities, the Abyssinians addressed themselves to me. I sought an interview with Khourshid Pasha with the view of using my good offices in favour of the Abyssinians for the purpose of bringing about an amicable adjustment of the dispute. On stating to the Pasha the object of my visit, his Excellency at once met me with the inquiry whether there existed in the Consulate any Firman or Vizirial Letter instructing the Governor of Jerusalem to recognise the British protection of the Abyssinians. I had to reply in the negative. He then said that in his own general instructions the Abyssinians were designated as Turkish subjects, and proceeded to read to me extracts from some official documents which certainly appeared to bear out his statement on this head; his Excellency added that under these circumstances he could not entertain any representations or admit any right of intervention on my part in behalf of the Abyssinians, and concluded by inviting me, if not satisfied, to write to him officially on the object of my visit.

As to the second alternative proposed by his Excellency, I did not consider myself authorised, looking to my predecessor's instructions and correspondence on the subject of the Abyssinians, to adopt it, and I moreover felt that it could but lead to the same conclusion already thus verbally announced by the Governor.

The case was proceeded with at the Medjliss, under the presidency of the Pasha himself, and in the presence of both parties. The decision of the Medjliss was given in favour of the claims of the Copts, with the proviso that the Abyssinians were to be allowed to make use of both the Convent and Chapel under certain conditions.

Not having assisted at the inquiry I am unable to form an opinion as to the justice of this verdict. It appears that neither party had more than oral testimony to adduce in support of their respective pretensions, but the Abyssinians could add to this the fact of

possession. They also allege that their written titles were burnt, purposely, by the Armenians and Copts during the panic and confusion of the last visitation of the plague in this city, at the time of the Egyptian domination.

The Abyssinians came to me with complaints of the injustice of the decision of the Medglia. I told them that if they would address to me a statement of their case, with all the evidence they could furnish, I would undertake to submit it to your Excellency for your consideration, with such recommendation to your Excellency's favourable notice as I could properly give. This they have not done, and it is understood that they are preparing to abandon Jerusalem altogether and return to their country, a course their head priest has already followed.

No. 21.

Earl Russell to Consul Moore.

Sir,

Foreign Office, September 27, 1865.

THE attention of Her Majesty's Government has been drawn to a statement that one of the causes of the ill-treatment of British subjects has arisen out of your not having afforded to Abyssinians in Jerusalem that protection which was given to them by your predecessor, and of having asserted that in thus acting you were obeying the orders of Her Majesty's Government.

I have now to desire that you will inform me whether this statement is correct, and, if so, to what orders you refer as prohibiting you from rendering assistance to Abyssinians, and as superseding the positive orders given by the Earl of Malmesbury, in July 1852,* to Her Majesty's Consul at Jerusalem, to use, in case of need, his good offices for the protection of any Abyssinians who might chance to be in Jerusalem, as being members of a Christian Church in spiritual communion with the Established Church of this country, and which orders were repeated by me in May 1862,† and are still in force for your guidance.

I am, &c.
(Signed) RUSSELL.

No. 22.

Earl Russell to Consul-General Eldridge.

(Extract.)

Foreign Office, September 27, 1865.

I TRANSMIT to you a despatch which I have addressed to Mr. Consul Moore at Jerusalem, respecting an allegation which has become a matter of public notoriety, that he has failed to afford to Abyssinians in the Holy City the good offices ordered by Her Majesty's Government to be given to them.

This allegation is somewhat confirmed by the tenor of a report which I find that Mr. Moore made to Sir H. Bulwer on the 28th September, 1863, a copy of which I inclose,‡ and by which you will see that, instead of carrying out the instructions of Her Majesty's Government, he offered no remonstrance to objections raised by the Turkish Governor to his interference, nor to the assertion of the Pasha that Abyssinians were Turkish subjects. Mr. Moore's predecessor had rendered good offices to Abyssinians as members of a Christian Church in spiritual communion with the Church of England, and Mr. Moore should equally have remonstrated against the language of the Pasha and the acts of the Turkish authorities; but if a British Agent submits, without protest at the right time, to whatever may be said to him by a foreign authority and thus leaves the instructions of his Government to be dealt with in a different spirit to that in which they were framed, such Agent becomes practically of little use.

* No. 2.

† No. 16.

‡ See Inclosure in No. 20.

No. 23.

Consul Moore to Earl Russell.—(Received November 6.)

My Lord,

Jerusalem, October 21, 1865.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your Lordship's despatch of the 27th ultimo,* directing me to inform your Lordship whether a statement that I had not afforded to Abyssinians in Jerusalem that protection which was given to them by my predecessor, and that I had asserted that in thus acting I was obeying the orders of Her Majesty's Government, is correct.

I have the honour, in reply, to say that this statement, in both particulars, is not correct. What actually occurred was duly reported by me to Her Majesty's Ambassador at the Porte in a despatch† of which I transmitted a copy to the Foreign Office, in my despatch of October 3, 1863, and of which I beg leave now to annex a copy.

The contents of my report show that I used my good offices for the protection of the Abyssinians, which I did to the full extent of the authority given to me, it follows that I could not have made the assertion that I had received orders not to do so.

My report elicited no reply or intimation from the Embassy.

I may add that insistance would have been worse than useless, it would have led to profitless collision with the Turkish authorities; Khourshid Pasha was peculiarly jealous of Consular intervention in any form, and, although I explained to his Excellency that my interposition was one of good offices, he could not, or would not, see the distinction between that and official interference.

I have, &c.

(Signed) NOEL TEMPLE MOORE.

P.S. Khourshid Pasha, the then Governor of Jerusalem, is the present Finance Minister of Turkey.

N. T. M.

No. 24.

Consul-General Eldridge to the Earl of Clarendon.—(Received February 7.)‡

(Extract.)

Beyrout, January 30, 1866.

WITH reference to Earl Russell's despatch of the 27th of September last,§ I have the honour to inform your Lordship that, during my recent visit to Jerusalem, I devoted much of my time to a careful investigation into Mr. Consul Moore's proceedings in regard to the Abyssinians.

In order fully to understand the whole question, I examined with much diligence the correspondence of Mr. Consul Finn on this subject from the year 1850 to the year 1862.

From this correspondence it appears that Mr. Finn repeatedly represented, both to the Foreign Office and to Her Majesty's Embassy, that, in order to afford to the Abyssinians any efficient protection against their powerful enemies and oppressors, it would be necessary to procure their recognition by the Porte as foreigners, and as under British protection; foretelling, what has since occurred, that, unless this could be done, they would be deprived of their property in Jerusalem in favour of the Copts, with whom the Turkish authorities persisted in treating them as identical, and obstinately denying the right of the English Consul to intervene in their affairs.

On the other hand, I find that, in answer to these representations, Mr. Finn is referred by Earl Russell's despatch of the 29th May, 1862,|| to the original instructions of 1852,¶ authorizing him to use his good offices for the protection of any Abyssinians who may chance to be in Jerusalem, as being members of a Christian Church in spiritual communion with the Established Church of England; and Earl Russell modifies this authority by an injunction to use it with caution and prudence. Her Majesty's Ambassador also, when appealed to by Mr. Finn, in June 1862, declines to interfere in the matter.**

As the despatch from the Embassy here referred to may not exist in the Archives of the Foreign Office, I have the honour to inclose a copy.

* No. 21.

† Inclosure in No. 20.

‡ Laid before Parliament, 1867.

§ No. 22.

|| No. 16.

¶ No. 9.

** See No. 18.

Such appears to have been the position of affairs when Mr. Moore succeeded Mr. Finn.* In 1863, when the quarrel between the rival sects concerning the ownership of the Abyssinian convent seems to have reached its culminating point, Mr. Moore attempted to use his good offices in behalf of the Abyssinians, with a view of protecting them from spoliation and assisting in bringing about an amicable adjustment of the dispute; but on being met with the old objection that the Abyssinians are Rayahs, and that he had no right to interfere, he did not consider himself justified in risking a compromise of his position by trying to sustain by official correspondence a right which he could not substantiate, and took the prudent and cautious course of reporting the circumstances to his superiors, and awaiting further instructions should it be decided advisable to adopt more formal and energetic measures.

In regard to the alleged influence of Mr. Moore's conduct upon the treatment of British subjects in Abyssinia, I am more inclined to attribute any blame there may be to the injudicious zeal of his predecessor, who, from his despatch of the 21st June, 1858,† appears to have informed some Abyssinians of distinction who visited Jerusalem that their fellow-countrymen were, in this country, under Her Majesty's gracious protection, and to have addressed a letter to the King of Abyssinia to the same effect.

Inclosure in No. 24.

Sir H. Bulwer to Consul Finn.

Sir,

Constantinople, July 3, 1862.

AS I perceive by an instruction addressed to you on the 29th of May last,‡ that Earl Russell has already informed you of the course you should adopt relative to the qualified protection you are authorized to accord to Abyssinians at Jerusalem, I do not think it necessary to interfere any further in regard to the matters adverted to in your despatch of the 3rd ultimo.§

I am, &c.

(For Sir H. L. Bulwer)

(Signed)

E. M. ERSKINE.

No. 25.

Memorandum respecting the Abyssinians at Jerusalem, by the Rev. W. W. Mulet, formerly and for ten years in the Bombay Civil Service, July 22, 1867.

DURING a visit I paid to Jerusalem between the 1st and 20th of June, 1867, I became acquainted with the heads of the various Christian communities there, viz., Greek, Latin, Armenian, Syrian, Coptic, and Abyssinian.

Of this last, Father Saleeh, a priest, is at present Superior. Their convent consists of miserable huts and caves adjoining the ruins of a hospice of the Knights of St. John of Malta,|| close to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and the well-built convent of the Copts. In this community of Abyssinians there are now seventy-one members, four of whom are priests. For four years past they have not been able to have their "Eucharist"—a holy communion, on account of being without a place for worship, i. e., a chapel and altar in the Church of the Sepulchre—like all the other communities. Saleeh was much hurt at this, and said "it was taking life from them." Till four years ago, for a long time, they had used the same chapel and altar as the Copts, who had now obtained exclusive use of it.

Mr. Finn, the British Consul, had wished them to continue their right; but when a dispute arose, it went before the Court at Constantinople, where they had no one to speak for them. At one time the Copts forced open the door of the chapel when it was the Abyssinians' turn to have it from Mr. Finn. The British Consul had been directed to use his influence to obtain justice for them; but when the violence of the Copts was reported by him to the British Ambassador, Sir Henry Bulwer, at Constantinople,¶ the Consul could not obtain a reply, so he could do nothing. King Theodoros had been informed of the whole matter, but he was so engaged in war that he could not send any one to plead for them.

* See No. 22.

† No. 12.

‡ No. 16.

§ Inclosure in No. 19.

|| They declare this site is inherited from the Queen of Sheba, to whom Solomon gave it.

¶ See Inclosure in No. 19.

Salceeb knew that several English were in prison in Abyssinia, and was very sorry for it. The Copts were rich, and had paid large sums of money at Constantinople to obtain their ends; but the Abyssinians had no money.

The above information was given to me by Salceeb during an interview I had with him in his miserable dwelling. He requested me to take to England a book he had written for Lord Bute; he also sent me a letter to Lord Bute concerning his grievances, and showed me the following testimonial:—

“*Jerusalem, September 14, 1866.*”

“I am requested by Father Salceeb, Superior of the Abyssinian convent here, to give him a certificate that I am now having a copy of the *Æthiopic Missal* transcribed for me by one of his religious. I may take the opportunity of saying that I believe there could not be another object found more deeply needing charitable offerings than this community.

“(Signed) BUTE.”

They call the language “*Amharic*.” They showed me several manuscript copies of the four Gospels beautifully written by them. The language is not printed apparently:—

“On the 19th of June I met Benjamin, a Greek, and very learned Professor of the Theological Seminary at the Greek Convent and College of St. Cross, two miles from Jerusalem. He said the Greeks were well disposed towards the Abyssinians, who had been hardly treated. He believed that the continuance of the captivity of the English by Theodorus was caused by this treatment, viz., the privation of the holy place in the Church of the Resurrection. The British authorities at first defended the Abyssinians, and then deserted them. He had heard that an Armenian had been employed to intercede with the King on behalf of the prisoners, which was absurd: for, firstly, the Armenians, taking advantage of the poverty of the Abyssinians, had deprived them of their property; and, secondly, they were a people unknown to King Theodore. Professor Benjamin said the plan would be to get the Coptic Patriarch at Cairo, and the Greek Patriarch at Alexandria, to intercede with Theodorus, and at the same time the British Government to treat with the King, and offer, by way of ransom, to supply the Abyssinians in their convent with food to the same amount as the Armenians do, who, being relieved of this obligation, might be induced to give up part of the vast space they have in the Church of the Sepulchre, for a chapel to the Abyssinians, in which the Sultan could greatly assist, as the Armenians are his subjects. The Armenians supply the Abyssinians daily with two large casaroles of soup and seventy-five small loaves of bread at the cost of about 40 piastres, or 10 francs, per diem, which might be discharged at once by comparatively a small sacrifice for England, say, about 3,000*l*. The custom began 100 years ago, when the Abyssinians were starving, and when to obtain this allowance of food they gave up to the Armenians all that space in the Church of the Sepulchre which now is occupied by their convent in the precincts and their chapels, reserving only a small chapel for themselves and the Copts in common, their worship being the same.”

I saw the poor Abyssinians wandering about the vast courts and passages of the church as if broken-hearted, urging their prayers and reading their bibles against the stone walls.

Their patience and devotion is worthy of a better fate, and their poverty is deserving of pity from the British nation.

From the kindness which I received from the Armenian Patriarch at the Convent of St. James, on Mount Sion, I feel sure he would listen to terms in behalf of these poor people; and if my services be required in this affair by Her Majesty's Government, I am quite willing to return to Jerusalem in November next. The Armenian Patriarch had all my credentials, *e.g.*, passports—letter commendatory from the Archbishop of Canterbury; letter from the Association for Promoting Reunion of Christendom; letter from the Society of St. Joseph for England; letters of Priests' Orders—translated into his language, and then gave me permission to use his Chapel of the Holy Spirit for celebration of Holy Communion at Whitsuntide.

To arrange the matter with the Armenians would, of course take more time; but the fact of its being entertained by Her Majesty's Government and by the Sultan (while he is still in England) being communicated at once to King Theodorus from the Queen and the Sultan, would probably turn him to show mercy to the suffering captives. Surely it would be worth trying, before making warlike preparations against him.

It is the common saying in Jerusalem that “formerly the Abyssinians were under

the protection of the British Government, and then they were able to worship at Jerusalem, but now they have been 'discharged' from that protection, and the Copts have gained all by money."

Phoenix Club, 17, St. James's Place, London, July 22, 1867.

(Signed)

WILLIAM WYNDHAM MALET,

*Vicar of Ardeley, Herts (on leave). Pilgrim to Jerusalem in 1867,
for the Association for Promoting Union of Christendom, con-
sisting of near 10,000 Members.*

ABYSSINIA.

CORRESPONDENCE respecting Abyssinians at Jeru-
salem: 1850-1867.

*Presented to the House of Commons, in pursuance
of their Address dated December 5, 1867: with
further Papers presented by Command of Her
Majesty. 1868.*

[Price 6d.]

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Selected India Office Records on Colonial Africa. British Library.
Nineteenth Century Collections Online, link.gale.com/apps/doc/AOEQMY366882180/GDCS?u=loc_main&sid=GDCS&xid=206820de&pg=4. Accessed 12 Feb. 2021.